

THE HUMBLE SAVIOR

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Son of God humbled Himself to take on flesh (Phil. 2:5-7; Heb. 4:15).
2. The Son of God humbled Himself to die on the cross (Phil. 2:8).
3. The Son of God humbled Himself to bring forth the victory (Phil. 2:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Background Passages: Philippians 2; Hebrews 4; 2 Corinthians 5

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

The Son of God provided salvation through His humiliation on earth.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself by taking on flesh and living on the earth amongst His creation. Although He was without sin, Jesus gave up His life on the cross, paying the sin penalty owed by others. Jesus rose from the dead in victory. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven of their sin and are credited with His righteousness so that they too bring glory to the Father.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because Jesus secured our salvation through His humiliation on earth, we humble ourselves, always seeking to put God's plan and the needs of others above our own.

GROUP TIME

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in the shaded areas throughout the session.



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.

INTRODUCTION

ASK: As participants arrive, ask: **How does the world around us view humility—as a virtue or a weakness—and why?** (some may say “weakness” because the strong and mighty are revered more, those who put their needs first are admired for being independent and go-getters; others may say “virtue” as videos of those who are arrogant or entitled are shamed on social media, we naturally lean toward those who are gentle and kind)

TRANSITION: The last month we have been looking at the growth of the church and its obstacles as seen in Acts 5-8. What we learn is that in serving others, dealing with opposition, and sharing the gospel, we are to emulate Christ because He shows us how to be humble in all those instances. We now look at Christ's character in Philippians to remind us about this humility.

SUMMARIZE: Help your group understand the **setting** for this session.

- Philippians 2:5-11 teaches great theological truths about the humanity and divinity of Jesus. However, when we only focus on this section apart from the rest of the letter, we miss out on what Paul was showing the Philippians. The church at Philippi faced a very serious crisis—there were divisions that were threatening the unity of the church. Their common faith in Jesus should have united them, however, they were divided. Thus, Paul wrote this portion to show that Jesus's humiliation should bring His people together. Paul was calling them to unity through the gospel.



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POINT 1

THE SON OF GOD HUMBLLED HIMSELF TO TAKE ON FLESH (PHIL. 2:5-7; HEB. 4:15).

READ: Instead of inviting someone to read, read aloud **Philippians 2:5-7** from your Bible and mention the discrepancy between versions if needed:

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

INTERACT: In small group of 2-3, ask, “How was Jesus a servant?” (He sacrificed His life for humanity; He served others in healing people spiritually and physically; He served the Father)

INSTRUCT: Discuss **verses 5-7** in light of the following main idea (Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG] p. 54):

Believers in Christ are called to unity and humility because Jesus humbled Himself.

- Verse 5 states, “Have this mind among yourselves.” What is this attitude or mind of Christ? It is the humility referred to in the prior verses (vv. 1-4) and expounded upon further in the coming verses (vv. 5-8). Paul called the church to be of one attitude, united by love and humility, looking to the interests of others. In their actions, believers should seek to reflect the same attitude of Christ.
- In verses 6-7, we are given a glimpse into what Jesus thought about the work He was to do for His people. Paul wrote that Jesus existed in the form of God (v. 6), meaning that He was not created. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit before time began. This teaching about Jesus is a fundamental distinctive of Christianity. Many other religions teach that Jesus is a god or partly God. However, Christianity teaches that Jesus is fully God and fully man.
- The word “form” carries with it the idea of the true and exact nature. Again, this proves that Jesus was divine. This “form” is strengthened even more when we see that Jesus “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6). Even though Jesus is God, He did not use that for His own advantage. Instead, He used that for the advantage of others—for our advantage and for our salvation!
- The phrase “emptied himself” has been the source of much debate. Paul is not saying here that Jesus gave up His divinity when He became man. That would not fit with Paul’s writings nor the rest of the New Testament about the divinity of Jesus. The phrase “emptied himself” means He gave up His status and privilege to come to earth, taking on human form.

PHILIPPIANS 2:7-8

Depending on the version of the Bible, some like the ESV end verse 7 with Jesus taking on the likeness of humanity while the next portion, “Being found in human form,” belongs to verse 8. Other versions like the CSB put the idea that He had “come as a man” in a clause with verse 7. Just note that verse 7’s ending and verse 8’s beginning may differ depending on the Bible version.

ASK: (DDG p. 54)

How have the world around us seen or not seen the humility and unity that are supposed to define Christians? (denominations unite in a community or fight against each other; believers unite even with diverse cultures or political views or divide because of the diversity; the world watches when Christians are easily angered or hateful)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Hebrews 4:15** from his or her Bible.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

EXPLAIN: Use **verse 15** and the points below to explain (DDG p. 54):

Jesus humbled Himself into the form of a human servant, that He could sympathize with us.

- Jesus is our ultimate High Priest, one who could come before God and atone for our sins. In His incarnation, becoming human, He was able to know what it's like to feel hunger and thirst, to feel tempted, to suffer. He experienced everything we experience.
- But unlike other high priests, Jesus was without sin. Thus, He truly could make that final sacrifice for us.

DIG: Say, "You've read from *Day 3 in the DDG*, that in AD 451 at Chalcedon, church leaders assembled and wrote a statement affirming both Jesus's full humanity and full divinity." Ask, "Why is it important that we affirm Jesus as fully God and fully human?" (because Scripture expresses it; because if He was not fully God, He could not be victorious over sin and death; because if He was not fully human, He could not be a substitute for us and atone for our sins)

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 54)

From *Day 3* in the DDG: **How does knowing Jesus is fully God and fully man encourage me in my Christian walk?** (being God and all-powerful, He is able to do anything; being human, He knows what it's like to be tempted; being God and all-good, He will help me through struggles; being human, He knows the weaknesses we feel)

TRANSITION: Fully God and fully human, Jesus alone is our perfect sacrifice.

POINT 2

THE SON OF GOD HUMBLLED HIMSELF TO DIE ON THE CROSS (PHIL. 2:8).

READ: Again, read aloud **Philippians 2:8** from the same version of your Bible.

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

HIGHLIGHT: Look at **verse 8** and highlight the following (DDG p. 54):

Jesus was not caught off guard by His death; He willingly and obediently went to the cross.

- Paul described that Jesus was obedient in His death. Paul emphasized the humility of Christ's death, "even death on a cross" (v. 8). Jesus did not just die of natural causes; no, He died a horrific death on the cross—the death of a criminal, even though He was innocent. He humbly submitted Himself to this death for the redemption of His people.
- The cross was seen as horrific because it was a brutal death. Crucifixion was brutal, but it was also a public shaming of the criminal who was being put to death. The person being crucified would be stripped down, nailed to wooden beams, and then lifted up so that bystanders could look at the punishment and avoid it at all costs.
- Jesus not only suffered physical pain on the cross, but He also bore the weight of sin as He suffered and died on the cross. On the cross, Jesus faced the wrath of God poured out on sin. Galatians 3:13 says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'"
- Due to our sin, we are unable to save ourselves from the punishment for our sins. We are to humbly admit that we are sinners who cannot do anything to gain our salvation. Thus, we are to cry out to God to save us through Jesus by faith. Our faith in Christ is a humble statement to the world that we have done nothing to earn our salvation.
- As the Philippians were divided and considering their own interests over those of others (Phil. 2:4), Paul called them to consider the humility that Christ had. When they would see Jesus for what He did, they should seek to be humble in their interactions with each other. The same should be true for us as well. When we interact with others, we should seek to model the humility of our Savior.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Pride must die in you, or nothing of Heaven can live in you."¹

—William Law
(1686–1761)

ASK: (DDG p. 54)

How was Jesus's death on the cross the ultimate act of humility?

(Jesus is God—He did not have to save anyone, but He did; Jesus did not have to die because He was perfectly sinless, but He did; Jesus had authority to get down off the cross, but He stayed for the salvation of the world)

FOCUS: Invite a volunteer to read the key doctrine below (DDG p. 54):

Key Doctrine #55: Christ's Humiliation: Although God the Son was equal with God and worthy of all the glory God receives, He chose to humble Himself by taking on human flesh. He left His glorious state and came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), and He experienced a humiliating death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8) by becoming sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

- Jesus was the only person who ever lived that did not deserve death. However, He humbled Himself and experienced death on the cross so that we could have eternal life.
- Philippians 2:7-8 describe Jesus's incarnation and humility. Verse 8 specifically describes the atonement—Christ's saving work on behalf of sinners. Jesus, the Creator of the universe, humbled Himself to become man, lived a perfectly sinless life, and died on the cross. Why did Jesus do this? He did this for us. Jesus did this to save His people from their sins.
- Notice how Paul described Jesus's humiliation: "He humbled himself." Jesus was not humbled by someone else, rather Jesus voluntarily went to the cross on our behalf. Jesus did not have to die. He did not deserve to die; but He humbled Himself to death on a cross. Neither the religious leaders nor Pilate were the ones who humbled Jesus, He willingly went to the cross.

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 54)

How does Jesus's humility destroy our pride? (Jesus's humility shows us that we should never think too arrogantly of ourselves; if the God of the universe would humble Himself to die for undeserving sinners, then there is no task too small for any of us to do)

TRANSITION: Jesus humbled Himself to the horrific death on the cross. However, His humble death was not the final word. God would raise Jesus up from the dead and bring forth victory over sin and death.

POINT 3

THE SON OF GOD HUMBLISHED HIMSELF TO BRING FORTH THE VICTORY (PHIL. 2:9-11; 2 COR. 5:21).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Philippians 2:9-11** from his or her Bible.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

DIG: Invite a volunteer to read John 10:17-18. Ask, “How do John 10:17-18 and Philippians 2:8-11 complement each other?” (Jesus said that He had authority to lay down His life; Paul described how Jesus humbly laid down His life; both texts describe the resurrection in that in John 10, Jesus predicts His death and resurrection, while Philippians 2 explains the nature of Christ’s death and resurrection)

EXPLAIN: Using **verses 9-11**, explain the following (DDG p. 55):

Jesus’s humility led to His exaltation, that the world would come to know Him and confess Him as Lord.

- So far, we have seen Jesus’s humility through the incarnation and His perfect life. We have seen the atonement through His death on behalf of sinners. Now we see His exaltation, where God would raise Jesus up. The incarnation, atonement, and exaltation are three important aspects of Christology, the study and understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done.
- Jesus’s exaltation at the right hand of God began when He walked forth out of that grave on the first Easter morning. But continued when God exalted Him and gave Him “the name that is above every name” (v. 9). What is the “name” that God the Father has given to Jesus? Some scholars say the name is simply “Jesus,” while others believe that it is the title of “Lord” (v. 11). The word used for “Lord” in the New Testament is often connected with God’s divine name in the Old Testament of YHWH. In the Greek version of the Old Testament YHWH was translated as “Lord.” There is possibly an allusion to Isaiah 45:23, which says, “By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’”
- Through Jesus’s exaltation, the world will bow before Him and confess Him as Lord. This is the fulfillment and victory of God’s plan of redemption: that those who believe would find salvation and victory and those who don’t will one day still come to bow before the Lord as well.

ASK: (DDG p. 55)

How does knowing Jesus is victorious encourage us in our evangelism efforts? (we fear less because we know God wins; we know God is the one changing hearts, not us; we know we can be obedient because God's kingdom will grow with or without us)

HIGHLIGHT: Pass out **PACK ITEM 7: HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION** and review Philippians 2:9-11 again. Highlight how Paul describes Christ's humiliation and exaltation so effectively in the way he wrote these verses, and how we are to model the same humility of Christ.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **2 Corinthians 5:21** from his or her Bible.

21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

INSTRUCT: Discuss **verse 21** as you instruct the point below (DDG p. 55):

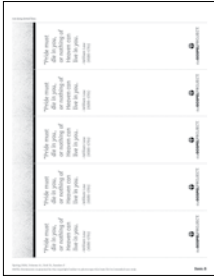
We have victory in Christ because He became sin for us, that we might have the righteousness of God.

- Second Corinthians 5:21 is an important verse for explaining the saving work that Jesus did on the cross and the effect His saving work has on all those who humbly confess Him as Lord. This verse helps us understand the nature of the atonement and the change Christ's saving work brings upon believers.
- Paul described how Jesus was without sin, "the one who knew no sin" (v. 21). Even though Jesus was sinless, He bore the punishment of our sins upon Himself. The reason Jesus did this is so that "we might become the righteousness of God." This important truth teaches us the nature of justification. For those who have trusted in Christ, they are given the perfect righteousness of Jesus.
- Jesus took the punishment of our sins upon Himself, and we get the blessing of salvation He earned. Jesus got what we deserved (punishment for sin) so that we get what we do not deserve (Christ's perfect righteousness).

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 55)

What are ways we can honor Christ, knowing He humbly died and took on our sin, giving us His righteousness? (daily live like Him and for Him; daily spend time with Him; glorify Him with all our actions; tell others about Him)





MY RESPONSE

SAY: Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself by taking on flesh and living on the earth amongst His creation. Although He was without sin, Jesus gave up His life on the cross, paying the sin penalty owed by others. Jesus rose from the dead in victory. All who trust in Jesus are forgiven of their sin and are credited with His righteousness so that they too bring glory to the Father. Because Jesus secured our salvation through His humiliation on earth, we humble ourselves, always seeking to put God's plan and the needs of others above our own. Prepare ahead of time the bookmarks in **PACK ITEM 8: PRIDE OR HEAVEN BOOKMARK** to pass out and read together to be a reminder of the importance of humility.

HEAD:

Jesus is fully God and fully man. He alone is able to save because He was sinless. Jesus did not have to die on the cross because He is the only One to ever live a sinless life. Yet, His status as the perfect Son of God did not lead Him to pride. Rather, He humbled Himself for our sake to a horrific death on the cross. However, God the Father raised Him up, and now Jesus is exalted above all.

How are Jesus's humility and servanthood different from what we see in the world today?

HEART:

We must confess Jesus as our Lord. Jesus alone has the power to save us from our sins. Jesus took our sins upon Himself so that we would not face the punishment for our sins. We must see what Jesus did for us and cry out to Him in faith to save us. Our confession that Jesus is Lord is a statement that He alone deserves all praise, honor, and glory.

How does your life reveal that you believe and confess Jesus is Lord?

HANDS:

Since Jesus alone is perfect, it means He alone can save people from their sins and bring them into right relationship with God. We must share this good news of our humble and exalted Savior! We must tell the world the good news of Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected for sinners and now ruling and reigning over all.

To whom this week can you tell the good news of Jesus Christ?

PRAY: Father, we thank You for what Christ went through on our behalf. Help us live humbly before You and help us be faithful witnesses for Jesus.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Every believing heart will cry it (Jesus is Lord) at the top of its lungs in voice and song, and we, with the angels, will do it over and over for all eternity. Every unbelieving heart will confess it too, in dismal submission and despair. Even Satan will do it. His knee and his tongue will not be excluded. . . . Hitler will do it. Stalin will do it. Every soul from every age will confess that Jesus Messiah is Yahweh."²

—R. Kent Hughes

EXTRA

POINT 1: THE SON OF GOD HUMBLLED HIMSELF TO TAKE ON FLESH (PHIL. 2:5-7; HEB. 4:15).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“The slave in the Greco-Roman world was deprived of most basic rights. Jesus gave up His sovereign rights and became a slave. The sovereign Creator made Himself nothing. He identified Himself with the lowest of society.”³

POINT 2: THE SON OF GOD HUMBLLED HIMSELF TO DIE ON THE CROSS (PHIL. 2:8).

+ **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY**

If the Lord Jesus Christ humbled Himself to become a servant, even to the point of death on the cross, how might we be able to serve others in the church? Break up into groups and discuss some tangible ways in which you can humbly serve one another.

POINT 3: THE SON OF GOD HUMBLLED HIMSELF TO BRING FORTH THE VICTORY (PHIL. 2:9-11; 2 COR. 5:21).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“It is important to recognize Jesus Christ for who he is. Jesus is God and the Savior of men and women. In the afterlife, all will both recognize and acknowledge him for who he is and what he has done—providing the only way to God by dying for our sins. Unfortunately, rejecting Christ while alive on earth will result in separation from God and eternal punishment outside of God’s presence. This fate can and should be avoided by trusting in Christ as one’s Savior today!”⁴

References

1. William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer* (London: Pasternoster Row, 1749), 74.
2. R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 93.
3. Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 97.
4. Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 235.